

Abstract 625

TITLE: Prevalence and Associations of Selected Misconceptions About Correct Condom Use Among U. S. Adolescents: Results from a National Study

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BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVES: Studies assessing adolescents' knowledge about correct condom use have not been reported in the literature. This report presents the results of a national study of adolescent health concerning the prevalence of three misconceptions about correct condom use among adolescents.

METHODS: Data were from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (1995). The sample was 16,677 adolescents. Misconceptions assessed were (1) the condom should be placed tightly onto the penis with no space needed for the receptacle tip, (2) condoms will work just as well when Vaseline is used with them, (3) lambskin condoms provide better protection against the AIDS virus than latex condoms. Variables concerning perceived knowledge of correct condom use, actual condom, and several candidate predictor variables of misconceptions (e.g. sexual intercourse experience, race, residence, parents' education) were selected. Chi-square tests and forward stepwise logistic regression were used.

RESULTS: The greatest number of misconceptions concerned the receptacle tip, with about one-third to one-half providing an incorrect answer. About 3 of every 10 participants indicated that Vaseline can be safely used with condoms, and about 2 of every 10 believed that lambskin is better than latex for HIV prevention. Perception of knowledge was infrequently related to actual knowledge about correct condom use. Misconceptions about correct condom use were less likely among older adolescents, those reporting four or more lifetime sexual intercourse partners, those who ever had sexual intercourse, females, and those reporting religious affiliation ($p \leq .001$).

CONCLUSIONS: The prevalence of the misconceptions was alarmingly high. Females knew more about the only male-centered method of STD/HIV prevention/birth control than did males, and those who ever had sexual intercourse were less likely to have misconceptions. School HIV/STD education programs should promote accurate knowledge about correct condom use, starting at middle school/junior high school. Studies of adolescent condom use should also assess correct condom use.

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